

AFTER FIFTEEN YEARS.

A New Year's Story.

By CLARISSA MACKIE.

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It was New Year's eve, and Marcia Scott sat staring into the fire with unseeing eyes and compressed lips.

"I told him I'd wait fifteen years and no longer," she sighed. "The fifteen years are up tonight at 12 o'clock. If he doesn't appear then with the fortune he promised I shall start the new year by marrying Captain Ladd."

Marcia's eyes blazed indignantly as she made this declaration. Fifteen years ago Jeremiah Allen had kissed her goodbye and gone away to the gold fields to seek a fortune for them both.

"I'll come back within two years, Marcia," he had boasted at the last. "I'll be rich then, and you'll marry me, won't you? You'll wait for me two years. There ain't any money in farming—you'll wait for me just two years, Marcia, won't you?"

"I'll wait fifteen years, Jere," she had promised. "That is an awful long time, and it proves how much—I care!" Jeremiah had admitted tenderly that it did prove Marcia's love, and so he had trudged away into the west. The years had dragged by, and Jeremiah had not made a fortune, but Marcia was still waiting.

Every month her lover had written a long letter, and these letters became at last a history of disillusionment and hard, hard work—a history of digging underground, of great "strikes" and disastrous business deals in which Jeremiah Allen always came out a poorer and wiser man than when he entered. It would seem that with so much poverty and wisdom thrust upon him Jeremiah might have done better, but he never did.

His last letter had contained glowing accounts of a new camp in the Klondike. He was there now, she thought. "If Jeremiah doesn't come tonight I shall marry Captain Ladd in a month," averred Marcia again as she stared steadily at the fire.

The clock ticked above the high mantelshelf, the cat purred noisily in the warm corner, and the logs hissed and spat in the fireplace. Outside it was snowing softly, and now and then a large flake touched the window pane with a muffled rap.

"If he doesn't come tonight," she argued with herself, "he can't expect me to wait for him any longer. I'm thirty-eight now. I shall marry Captain Ladd in a month." She shuddered a little at the sight of Captain Ladd's rufous visage peering at her around the clock on the shelf.

"I don't s'pose Jere'd want to see that picture on the shelf," she mused as she hid it in a drawer. "He used to be jealous. I expect he's an old man now. He must be forty-two. I hope he is rich. I can't stand another year of poverty—it's too grinding. If he comes back penniless I shall marry Captain Ladd anyway!"

With this resolution the door opened, and in walked the captain, his hair and beard sprinkled with clinging snowflakes until he looked like a veritable Santa Claus.

"Thought I'd watch in the new year with you, Marcia," he puffed as he unwound himself from several yards of woolen muffler. "I thought to myself that as we was likely to go through the year together as man and wife mebbe it'd be a good idea to watch the new year in together, eh?"

Marcia hesitated. "Well," she murmured, with a reluctant glance at the clock, "I kind of expected some one else tonight—some one who promised to be here—but I guess he—they ain't coming."

"Does that mean you want me to stay, Marcia?"

Marcia nodded gravely. "If the right company had come I'd have said no," she explained wistfully. "You understand I'm not marrying for love. I'm lonely, and I want companionship and some one to take care of."

The captain nodded. "I'm willing to be took care of," he said solemnly. Marcia knitted calmly, the warm red wool of the mittens threading her strong fingers like rippling flames. It was not easy to realize that she was practically engaged to Captain Ladd. The old sailor had pursued her ever since Jeremiah's departure fifteen years before.

"You can have the house repapered if you want to, Marcia," said the good captain after awhile.

"All right," agreed Marcia in a muffled voice.

"I'm going to buy a new carriage,



HE TRUDGED AWAY INTO THE WEST.



"HERE'S WISHING YOU A HAPPY NEW YEAR!"

too, so's we can drive a town in proper fashion. The old buggy is all in tatters."

"That will be nice," murmured Marcia. "We might get married on Valentine's day. That'll give you time to get ready, eh, Marcia?" he said playfully.

"Very well," consented Marcia mechanically. The hours wore on. She put refreshment of cider and doughnuts before her sailor lover, but she did not touch them herself.

When the clock chimed 12 he arose and turned a merry eye toward her. "Here's to your health, Marcia Scott, soon to be Marcia Ladd. Give me a kiss, my dear, to seal the bargain!" He leaned toward her suggestively.

"No, no!" cried Marcia vehemently. "I have made a mistake—I can't marry you, Captain Ladd. I am waiting for some one else. Oh, I cannot marry you—not this year!"

The captain glared angrily at her. "This year or none, ma'am! You've been a-putting me off more times than I want to remember! Shall we begin this new year together or not?"

"Not!" said Marcia firmly. "My mind's made up for good and all."

"Good night, and a happy new year to you, ma'am!" snapped Captain Ladd as he strode from the house.

"I didn't mean fifteen years, Jeremiah," whispered Marcia softly to herself as she thrust Captain Ladd's picture in the fire. "I meant I would wait always. I've just found it out."

There was a little contented smile on her face now as she dreamed before the fire, and so she did not hear a low tap at the door. Again it sounded, louder, and she rose to her feet, with a little frightened cry.

The door swung open, and this time a tall form entered and stamped the clinging snow from his feet.

"Marcia—little Marcia," he cried eagerly. "I ain't too late? You're waiting for me yet?"

"Yes," sobbed Marcia in Jeremiah's strong arms.

"I ain't rich, Marcia. I'm a dead failure at getting rich. I've come back to buy a farm and settle down. I've got just enough for that. Do you want me now, Marcia? I ain't rich, but I've got my two hands and you. Why, I am rich!" he laughed delightedly.

"And I am rich, too," sighed Marcia happily. "I have got you!"

The new year had already begun.

Not Such a Handicap.

Spratt—Yes, I know I'm a very ab-sent-minded fellow, but I'm always glad of it on New Year's.

Snaggs—How so?

Spratt—Why, I can break all my New Year's resolutions without causing any comment in the family.

The New Year's Shooter. This is the day when shooters shoot And then go home and "absolute" that next year surely, come what may, they will not shoot on New Year's day

TO NINETEEN-TEN.

Child of eternity, child of the silence,
Fair New Year,

Wise with the wisdom sages have left thee,
Bend thine ear,

Lift up the veil that covers thy features,
Strange New Year,

Rainbow a promise over the darkness,
Lest we fear!

Bury our yesterday, foolish and empty,
Fathoms deep;

Leave the mound unmarked, untended,
Where they sleep.

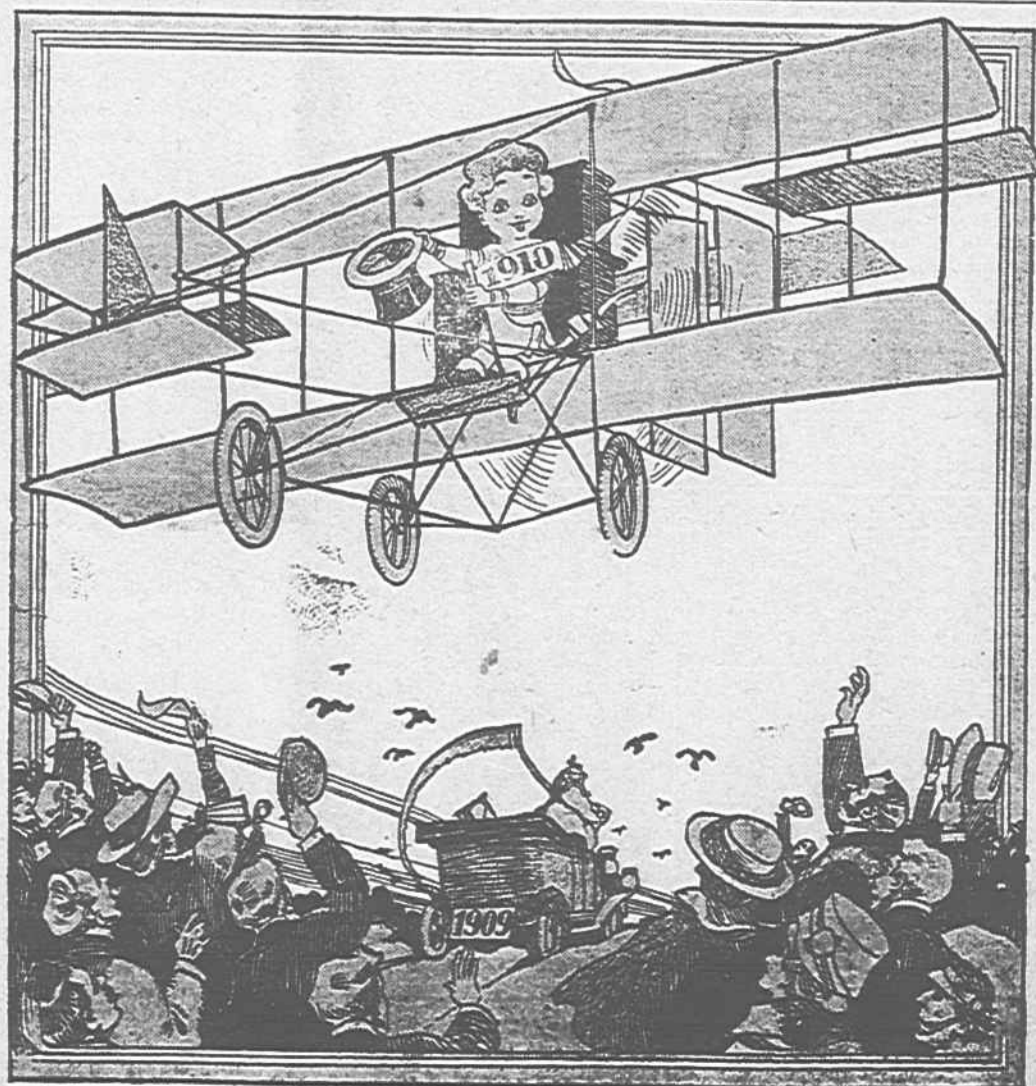
Then shall the morrows find us valiant,
Scorning fear,

Meeting thy glance with glance undaunted,
Glad New Year!

EDGAR E. WEBB.

TWELFTH NIGHT CAKE.

A Twelfth Night cake in England is as much a part of the holiday festivities as is the Christmas tree itself. On Twelfth Night various gayeties and revels are arranged, the cake being finally drawn in by the children on a decorated cart or borne aloft by the servants on a board trimmed with Christmas greens. A recipe for making the cake comes from England: Beat to a smooth cream two pounds of unsalted butter, then add two pounds of powdered sugar, a whole nutmeg grated and an ounce each of powdered cinnamon, ginger, mace and allspice. Beat this mixture ten minutes and add gradually twenty eggs, beating the cake after that for twenty minutes. Stir in, a little at a time, two pounds of flour, four pounds of currants, a half pound of bruised almonds and half a pound each of candied orange and lemon peel and citron, beating the cake lightly after each addition. Last of all add a claret glass of brandy. Line a large cake tin with well buttered paper and fill it three-quarters full of the dough, which will leave room for the cake to rise. Cover the top with the buttered paper, and if the oven bakes fast at the bottom put a tin under the cake to keep it from burning. It should bake for four and a half hours in a slow but well heated oven.



OFF WITH THE OLD YEAR, ON WITH THE NEW.

THE JOLLIEST SHOW IN ALL AMERICA.

By ROBERTUS LOVE.

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THE most remarkable circus in the world is the one that is given every New Year's eve in the New York Produce Exchange. The rich members of the exchange, who during the rest of the year are busy trading on the floor of the big building, knock off business for the afternoon and give up the floor to a circus performance for the delight of the poor children who live in the lower section of the great city.

The Produce Exchange stands close to the lower end of the island, on which the older part of New York city is built. This is not a residential section, being the area in which the wonderful skyscraper sky line of the city appears to the view of people a-sail on the bay or the rivers. Yet many families inhabit the older and shabbier buildings in the vicinity. Most of these families are quite poor and the children numerous. Santa Claus frequently forgets to visit them, but the children have their Christmas tree provided by the Produce Exchange men. A huge tree trimmed with candles, lanterns and all the finery of Santa Claus Land is lighted up for the children, while hundreds of baskets of luxuries and necessities are distributed.

Rows of seats arranged in a circle, tier upon tier, accommodate the delighted little ones. In the center is a real circus, with tanbark on the floor—same as Barnum's, Last New Year's



EDUCATED DOGS.

ave a uniformed band of eighty-five pieces from Roman Catholic institutions in the neighborhood furnished all the music the children wanted and more than some of them cared for. Inasmuch as the tots were there to yell with delight when the ringmaster, a member of the exchange, stepped into the ring, cracked his long whip and introduced the performers.

There were bareback riders, pony races, trained horses, trapeze performers, magicians, educated dogs, jugglers and clowns. Of course there were clowns. What would a circus be without them?

NEW YEAR'S EVE.

By FRANK H. SWEET.

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ONE thing the old year's brought to me, an' that's a real good friend. Who'd thought that Neighbor Gurley, now, could ever quite unbend?

Three years we've lived here side by side, the calendars aver, An' not a word had we exchanged except "Good evenin', sir!"

Well, I met him Chris'mas mornin' as we came along the street. I was just a-reachin' my door an' he his. We chanced to meet. So I tried him with a smile. Says I: "Well, neighbor, howdy do? Merry Chris'mas, an' I'm thinkin' I've got Chris'mas gift on you!"



"HE GIVE MY HAND A SHAKE."

Thought a minute he'd 'a' fallen, the way his features twitched. Then he give a hearty chuckle an' says he: "Well, I'll be switched! Why, that takes me forty year back!" An' he give my hand a shake. Till my arm from wrist to shoulder for a good hour felt the ache.

So we chatted for a little, an' at last he says to me:

"I'm a pretty lonesome fellow. Can't you come an' dine with me?" An' that evenin' I went over. (Susie's children had a "hop," An' them young folks made a bed-lam where I didn't care to stop.)

I'd a mighty pleasant evenin', an' I found out—well, it's strange How you can't size up a neighbor when you meet him just on 'change!

I've heard from other parties—he'd have never told himself—Gurley's got some square ideas about other things than pelf.

He had just that very mornin' sent the children's home a check An' had helped an old time school-mate of whom drink had made a wreck.

Beats all how some folks can do such things an' keep their face tart. What's the open hand at Chris'mas, though, without the open heart?



"HE SLAPS ME ON THE BACK."

Kind o' cast iron grin his smile was, but he thawed out when I spoke, An' to make things kind o' easy I worked off a little joke. Why, he fairly keeled with laughin', an' he slaps me on the back, An' before an hour was over we was callin' Seth an' Jack.

Settin' cheek by jowl an' tellin' 'bout the times when we was young. The huskin' an' the quiltin' an' the old time songs we sung. The coastin' an' the sleigh rides an' the dancin' in the barn. An' at tellin' old time stories he could cap me, every yarn.

But before I left we made it up to meet tonight ag'in, For we're bound to set the old year out an' see the New Year in.